

# U.S. Department of Justice

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## NEWS RELEASE

### **TENNESSEE SEX OFFENDER SENTENCED TO 17½ YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON FOR DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY**

Thomas A. Marino, United States Attorney for the Middle District of Pennsylvania, announced today that Richard Allen Hicks, age 52, a previously convicted sex offender from Knoxville, Tennessee, was sentenced by United States District Senior Judge Malcolm Muir to a 17½-year term of imprisonment for distribution of child pornography. After completion of his sentence, Hicks will remain on supervised release for the rest of his life.

According to U.S. Attorney Marino, from February 2005, until February 9, 2006, Hicks engaged in numerous on-line chats using a Yahoo! internet chat room with a person he thought was a 14-year-old girl living in Williamsport. In reality, he was chatting with an undercover FBI special agent who had been specially trained in tracking down on-line sexual predators. The subject matter of these chats was Hicks' expressed desire to indoctrinate the "girl" into a fetishistic master/slave lifestyle. To that end, he used a webcam to send a video recording of child pornography from Knoxville to Williamsport. Previously, in 1989 in Denton County, Texas, Hicks had been convicted of sexual assault on a child and sentenced to 10 years of probation.

U.S. Attorney Marino noted that this case demonstrated the continuing success of child exploitation prosecutions under the Department of Justice's Project Safe Childhood initiative: "Just a few weeks ago, I spoke to a group of middle school children in Williamsport and warned them about the dangers of individuals like this Defendant, a convicted sex offender, who prowl the

internet looking for victims. Because of the tenacious work of the FBI over a one-year investigation, this sexual predator was caught and will remain behind bars for a very long time. I would like to remind everyone that internet safety is critically important. We need to remind our children about what can happen and the dangers that they face if they communicate with strangers, such as this Defendant, on-line."

In February 2006, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as identify and rescue victims.

This case was investigated by the FBI-Williamsport Resident Agency in conjunction with the FBI-Knoxville and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Tennessee and prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Christian A. Fisanick, Chief of the Criminal Division.

For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit [www.projectsafechildhood.gov](http://www.projectsafechildhood.gov).

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